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PRESS RELEASE

State Officials Remind Public of the Dangers of Walking on Ice Covered Water Bodies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Department of Conservation & Recreation

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BOSTON — With recent warmer temperatures across much of Massachusetts, state officials are warning the public of the dangers associated with walking on ice over bodies of water, including lakes, ponds, reservoirs, streams, and rivers. Public safety and recreation officials from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Massachusetts State Police (MSP), the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), and the Department of Fire Services (DFS) remind residents and visitors to be conscious of the risks associated with walking on ice, particularly after warm weather, and ask that the public refrain from doing so.

The winter season offers unique outdoor recreational opportunities for the public to enjoy, including ice fishing, ice skating, and snowmobiling; unfortunately, year after year state and local officials receive and respond to reports of individuals falling through thin ice. In a short period of time, an individual who falls into icy waters can experience hypothermia like symptoms, which can become fatal if not treated immediately. Hypothermia symptoms include shivering, dizziness, hunger, nausea, accelerated breathing, difficulty speaking, lack of coordination, fatigue, and an increase in heart rate.

Ice safety tips the public should follow when near bodies of water during the winter months include:

- Parents should supervise their children;
- Never go onto ice alone;
- Always keep your pets on a leash, and do not let them out off-leash near bodies of water that are covered by ice;

- Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it from freezing. It can also hide cracks as well as other weak spots;
- Ice formed overflowing water (including springs under the surface) is generally weaker than ice over still water;
- Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be a foot thick in one spot or an inch thick in another;
- If a companion falls through the ice and you are unable to reach that person from shore, throw something to them (a rope, tree branch, even jumper cables from a car, etc.). If this does not work, go or phone for help. Get medical assistance for the victim immediately;
- If you fall in, try not to panic. Turn toward the direction you came from, and place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface, working forward by kicking your feet. Once the ice is solid enough to hold you, and you can pull yourself out, remain lying on the ice (do not stand; lying down spreads your weight across a wider area, lessening your weight on any one spot) and roll away from the hole. Crawl back the way you came, keeping your weight distributed, until you return to solid ice or ground; and,
- As the season progresses, plan accordingly and use caution, as the conditions of older ice greatly varies and is subject to rapid changes.

For further information regarding ice and winter safety tips, please visit the [DFS \(/service-details/ice-and-cold-water-safety\)](#) and the [MassWildlife](#)

[\(/service-details/ice-strength-and-safety\)](/service-details/ice-strength-and-safety) websites. The Massachusetts State Police reminds individuals to call 911 in the event of an emergency, such as an individual falling through thin ice. Additionally, several state parks and facilities provide outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the winter season, some of which have DCR rangers and/or staff facilitating many programs. Please visit the DCR's [website](#) [\(/orgs/departments-of-conservation-recreation\)](/orgs/departments-of-conservation-recreation) for details.

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Department of Conservation & Recreation

[\(/orgs/departments-of-conservation-and-recreation/\)](/orgs/departments-of-conservation-and-recreation/)

DCR manages state parks and oversees more than 450,000 acres throughout Massachusetts. It protects, promotes, and enhances the state's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

More [\(/orgs/departments-of-conservation-and-recreation/\)](/orgs/departments-of-conservation-and-recreation/)

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